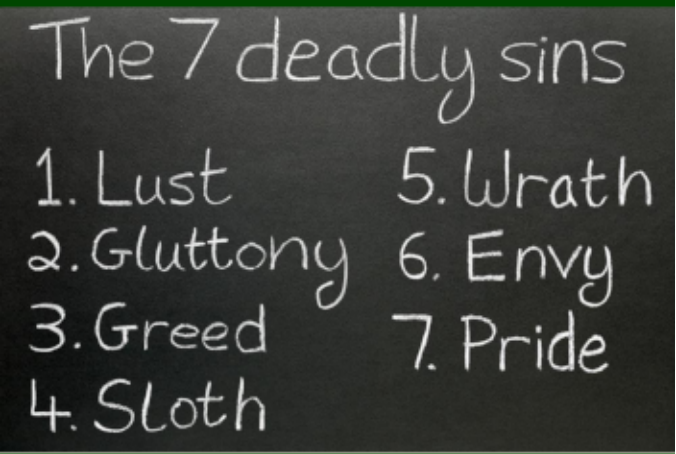
James Stalker

The Seven Deadly Sins



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"The history of the Church confirms and illustrates the teachings of the Bible, that yielding little by little leads to yielding more and more, until all is in danger; and the tempter is never satisfied until all is lost. – Matthias Loy, *The Story of My Life*

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THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS

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THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS

BY

JAMES STALKER

D.D.

London: Hodder & Stoughton

PREFACE

As the subject of this book may, by its novelty in Protestant religious literature, attract the attention of preachers desirous of leading their flocks to fresh fields and pastures new, it may be mentioned that its history, as a theological topic, is given in ZÖCKLER'S *Das Lehrstück von den Sieben Hauptsünden*, and that each of the seven sins is discussed with great acuteness and comprehensiveness in AQUINAS' *Summa* (*Secunda Secundæ*). The order varies in different writers; I have adopted that of the scholastic catchword SALIGIA, composed of the initial letters of the words Superbia, Avaritia, Luxuria, Invidia, Gula, Ira, Accidia.

JAMES STALKER.

GLASGOW, *March* 1901.

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PRIDE

In war it is a great advantage to possess a thorough knowledge of the country. Soldiers fighting on their own ground are able to attack when not expected, to draw the enemy into ambushes, and to vanish when hard pressed without paying the penalty of defeat. It is of equal importance to possess accurate information as to the numbers of the opposing side, their strength in the different arms, and their material equipment. The lack of such knowledge may involve even for the victors an enormous expenditure of life and treasure. These rules are no less true of spiritual than of physical warfare. If we are to cope with the

tempter, we must not be ignorant of his devices, and we must know the nature and the extent of the forces which he is to bring into the field. For this reason it has been one of the tasks of theology to enumerate the sins by which the human soul is beset, to search into their subtlety, and to expose their methods of attack; and, as the result of many centuries of observation, seven sins have been especially noted as the leaders and chieftains of those that war against the soul—pride, avarice, luxury, envy, appetite, anger, and sloth.

These seven sins are nowhere all mentioned together in any single passage of Scripture, although, of course, they are all often mentioned separately; and it is open to any one to question whether there are not others entitled to the bad pre-eminence of being called the deadly

sins; but the selection of these for this position is a conclusion reached, after centuries of discussion, by some of the acutest intellects of the race. I may refer in subsequent chapters to the history of the process by which this conclusion has been reached, but meantime I invite my readers to the study of the sin which heads the list—Pride.

I

It may not seem obvious that pride is the primary sin; but this has been the pretty unanimous conclusion of those who have investigated the subject most deeply; and it will reward any one to think out for himself the reasons why they have come to this conclusion. It will be remembered that this was the first sin of which we have any knowledge, for it was pride through which

the angels fell; and the outstanding feature of the character of the leader of the angels in that tragic drama, as Milton has depicted it, is arrogance. 'Better,' he cries, 'to reign in hell than serve in heaven.' In like manner, the sin of our first parents, which has brought woe to all their descendants, was pride; for the tempter whispered to them, 'Ye shall be as gods.' Besides, if any one reflect, he will perceive that in no other sin is the very essence of all sin so concentrated. The essence of sin is selfishness, and pride is the inordinate assertion of self; it would annihilate others, and it disdains to be prescribed to even by God.

The Latin name for pride, *superbia*, means aiming at what is above, and Chaucer says that the proud man is he who will always be swimming aloft. But the mere desire of what

is above us is not pride. Not to desire what is above us would be not to desire any kind of improvement. Those, indeed, who aim at excellence will always be exposed to the charge of pride, but the accusation may be groundless. A learned man cannot help being aware that he knows many things which an ignorant man does not; and by the latter it may be supposed that he must be proud on this account; but the increase of knowledge may, on the contrary, be making him every day more humble. In a promiscuous company, if a woman refuses to join in an uncomely game, she will be reproached as proud; but her maidenly modesty is really beautiful and virtuous. It is impossible to display any constancy or zeal in religion without being accused of pride, as if one considered oneself better than one's

neighbours; indeed, there are those who call every one who will not join with them in riot and excess a Pharisee and a hypocrite, without more ado: but God himself has said, 'Come out from among them, and be ye separate.' There is such a thing as proper pride; and, when an accusation of pride is brought, the accuser requires to be judged as well as the accused.

In pride, justly so called, there is always an element of falsehood. It is a claim to merits which are not possessed; or, if we possess them at all, we deceive ourselves and attempt to deceive others as to the degree in which we possess them. We deny and ignore the claims of others, in order that our own may be pre-eminent. We hate those who estimate us exactly for what we are worth; and arrogance, in its extreme

manifestations, demands that all should suspend their own judgments and accept its self-estimate at the point of the sword. This falseness seems to me to be the distinctive mark of pride.

II

Many kinds of pride have been distinguished. There is, for example, that which is within, in the heart, and there is that which is without, in the clothing, the furniture, or the like; though, as Chaucer characteristically remarks, the latter betrays the existence of the former, as the wine in a tankard at the door of a tavern speaks of the wine that is in the cellar.[1] Pride may be in thought, in speech, or in action. On speech it

[1] See *The Persone's Tale*, which discusses the Seven Deadly Sins very fully.

has an extraordinary effect. There are people whose conversation is nearly all about themselves. As often as the conversation strays to other subjects, they bring it back, for whatever any interlocutor relates reminds them of something that has happened to themselves, and this immediately becomes the absorbing topic. They know how to bring the conversation round by the most circuitous routes, in order to return to this favourite centre. They think their devices are unnoticed, but every one perceives them, for pride is constantly overleaping itself: it tries to make self out to be great, and in the very act of so doing proves it to be little. It is no uncommon thing for a man to be labouring to convince people of his superiority, when his transparent vanity is making him the laughing-stock of the whole

company. Boastfulness easily leads to exaggeration, and exaggeration to falsehood. It is no uncommon infirmity to be unable to speak the truth about oneself. Everything that has happened to us must be wonderful, and everything we have done must be great. And, whilst thus we are puffing ourselves out, people are saying behind our backs, 'You cannot believe a word he says.'

The most fruitful division, however, of the different kinds of pride is, in my opinion, that founded on the different kinds of gifts by which it may be excited. These may be gifts either of nature, or of fortune, or of grace.

1. Among gifts of nature, intellectual talents are often accompanied with an overweening sense of importance, and with the craving for recognition and notoriety. The man

of moderate gifts believes himself a nonsuch, and he who has achieved a little fame considers the applause of his coterie the murmur of the world. A Roman satirist has spoken of 'the irritable race of poets'; but all men and women of the artistic temperament have an itch for recognition and applause which, unless it is held in restraint by good feeling and good sense, makes them discontented with the acknowledgment they receive, and disposed to believe that the praise which is their due is being withheld through the cabals of enemies. In a character like the German philosopher Nietzsche, this self-importance is seen grown to such colossal dimensions that he makes out of his own morbid cravings a philosophy of existence, teaching that the only law for man is to grasp the universe in his desires and then

march forward to realise his ambition, in utter disregard of the happiness of other people. This is the apotheosis of pride.

Perhaps it is among women that the temptation is strongest to be proud of the gifts of the outward person, as it is chiefly on them that nature has bestowed beauty. It is not wrong to give to the body a certain degree of attention or to be happy in the possession of a fair face: but 'favour is deceitful and beauty is vain,' if it hides from its possessor the value of the soul or hardens the heart to the claims of others. It is not wrong to dress with care, according to one's station in life; but pride comes in when there is an aping of those in a superior station or when the attempt is made to appear to belong to a station above one's own. In these days, when

athletics are so much in vogue, it is, perhaps, rash to say that the temptation to pride in the body is stronger in the one sex than the other; for, I fancy, there must be an enormous development of vanity in connection with the exhibitions of strength of muscle and fleetness of foot before the crowds that gather to witness athletic contests, and with the reporting of these in the newspapers. On the other hand, the judgments of a crowd are uncompromisingly exact, and a man is brought to his senses when he has to measure his strength and skill against competitors. He learns the precise truth about himself, and this must tend to produce a humble mind.

2. The gifts of fortune are most dangerous when they are given suddenly and unexpectedly. The Bible is full of warning to those

who have been exalted to prosperity, lest they should be lifted up with pride and forget to whom they owe their wealth—'But Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked; thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God who made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.' It is not only, however, in the Bible that this tendency is noted: in the satiric literature of every age the sauciness and extravagance of those who have risen rapidly to opulence are objects of attack. Few have the steadiness of head and hand to carry a full cup, especially if it has been suddenly filled. The upstart forgets his old friends, is ashamed of his poor relations, and is an abject flatterer of those above himself into whose society he is seeking an entrance. Seldom is the sin of pride witnessed in more

repulsive forms than in the vulgar ostentation of the *nouveaux riches*.

3. Even spiritual gifts may be a cause of pride. Ay, even humility itself may give occasion to it, and one of our living poets makes Pride say:

> I am that voice which is the faint,
> First, far-off sin within the saint,
> When of his humbleness he first
> Takes thought; and I become that thirst
> Which makes him drunken with his own
> Humbleness, and so casts him down
> From the last painful stair that waits
> His triumphing feet at heaven's gates.[1]

And all will remember the late poet laureate's terrible picture of pride masquerading in the garb of humility in the figure of St. Simeon Stylites, and the saying of another great poet and thinker, that the devil's darling sin is the pride that apes humility.

[1] Arthur Symons, 'The Seven Sins' in *Images of Good and Evil*.

The typical instance of pride in spiritual gifts is the Pharisee, on whom our Lord Himself pours the vials of His sacred scorn. When in Church-courts the sins of the present day are spoken of, it is nearly always of the sins of the publican, the sinner and the harlot that the divines are thinking; but the Master of all divines, while casting a cloak of charity over the transgressions of these classes, mercilessly exposed the pride of the Pharisee and the scribe. To Him pride appeared to be the master-sin.

The Pharisee must have been, to some extent, consciously a pretender. He concealed the secret sins for which he deserved the contempt of men, and he wore a pretentious garb of virtues to secure the homage of the ignorant. But, for the most part, he deceived himself as well as the

public. He believed in the reality and trustworthiness of his own righteousness, and boldly challenged the verdict not only of man but of God. And herein lies the fatal danger of spiritual pride: it renders spiritual progress impossible. The Pharisee does not know that he is a bad man; how, then, can he be made a good one? If he knew, he might repent and betake himself to the source of spiritual strength. But God cannot save a man who is not aware that he needs to be saved. This is the main reason why pride is so often denounced in the Bible and placed by the wise first in the list of the sins. It is the deadly enemy of salvation. Salvation is the grand work of God, as it is the only hope of man; but a humble mind is required to appreciate and seek it. The publican who casts his eyes on the ground and beats

upon his breast, groaning, 'God be merciful to me, a sinner,' is an empty vessel, ready to receive the gifts of redeeming love; but for a Pharisee, satisfied with himself, and with nothing to pray about but his own merits, what can even redeeming love do? Pride frustrates the grace of God; it stays the hand of mercy; for the proud the Saviour has died in vain.

III

If any of the old books on the Seven Deadly Sins are opened, it will be found that, after speaking of a sin in its causes and manifestations, they always finish with the remedies for it. What, then, are the remedies for pride?

Anything that makes us think more of God or of our neighbour is a remedy; because, as I have said,

the essence of pride is selfishness. We are proud because we are thinking of ourselves alone and have forgotten the claims of God and the claims of our fellow-creatures. We have forgotten that God has given us all our gifts, whether of nature, fortune, or grace. These belong to Him; we are only stewards of them; and there is a day coming when we shall have to give an account of how they have been employed. And, if we receive our gifts that we may be the stewards of God, we receive them likewise that we may be the ministers of our fellow-creatures. It is only a pinch-beck greatness which lords it over others; the golden greatness consists in service.

In Dante's *Divine Comedy* those denizens of Purgatory[1] who are being

[1] The Scheme of the 'Purgatory' follows the order of the Seven Deadly Sins.

cleansed from the sin of pride are represented as walking over a marble path on which, like the words or figures on a flat tombstone, are carved pictures of notable historical instances of humility. By looking on these they are unlearning their arrogance. We need not wait for the next world, or any fancied scene of purification there, to put this into practice. Look at a figure like Moses in the Old Testament, who was 'meek above all men which were upon the face of the earth'; or the Virgin Mary in the New, coming with her humble offering of two pigeons to the altar of the Lord; or look at John Knox fleeing to hide himself when called upon to preach for the first time; or the late Dr. Cairns, whose friends discovered only after he was dead that he had been offered the principalship of Edin-

burgh University—look on men and women like these and learn how poor and false is the glare in which pride makes gifts to shine, in comparison with the gracious light with which they are invested by humility. But look, above all, to Him, who said, 'I am meek and lowly in heart.' His entire history is one continuous lesson of humility; for 'though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich.' Who can stand beside His cradle and still be proud? Who can stand beside the Carpenter of Nazareth and still be proud? Who can stand beside the Friend of publicans and sinners and still be proud? Who can stand beside the cross and still be proud? 'Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.'

AVARICE

I

No one who has pondered much on the course of human life will be astonished at avarice holding a high place on the roll of the deadly sins, for it has played a conspicuous and an evil part in history. The old authors who wrote on the Seven Deadly Sins used to assign to each of them a number of daughters—that is, of sins which each breeds—and the daughters assigned to avarice were numerous and ill-favoured. A large proportion of the wrongs and crimes of history has been due to the inordinate greed of gain. Indeed, the Bible itself says that 'the love

of money is the root of all evil.' Many attempts have been made to soften down this statement. Attention has, for example, been drawn to the fact that it is not about money the statement is made, but about the love of money. Then, it has been pointed out, the correct translation may be—'is *a* root of all evil,' not '*the* root.' Evil has many roots, and this is one of them. Or, again, the meaning may be that every kind of evil at one time or another springs from this root—it may spring from other roots here or there, but somewhere it is always springing from the love of money. In spite, however, of these ingenious suggestions, I am persuaded, the text means what it says. It is a magnificent hyperbole, to denote how widespread is the evil which money does—corroding the hearts of men, spoiling their happi-

ness, and setting them in conflict with one another. 'Man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn'; but the inhumanity springs, for the most part, from the desire of one man to possess that which belongs to another.

The lust of one country for the soil of another has, thousands of times, let loose war and pillage on innocent populations. The powerful have, in every age, under the sway of similar motives, plundered the goods and oppressed the persons of the weak. The lawful hire of toilers has been kept back by their employers, and human law has been too servile to say them nay; and so the rich have filled their granaries with the food which ought to have fed the poor, and worn as purple and fine linen what ought to have covered the persons of the naked. The love of

money has begotten the courage of the highwayman; it has sharpened the ingenuity of the thief; it has, many a time, put a knife in the hand of the murderer; and for thirty pieces of silver Judas sold his Master.

But, besides such tragic crimes, the record of which reddens the page of history, what a progeny of sordid sins the love of money is bringing forth every day. It teaches the merchant to adulterate his goods, the apprentice to put his hand into his master's till, the lawyer to lie, the operator on the Stock Exchange to swindle his clients. A Latin satirist, twenty centuries ago, charged the Roman fathers of his day with saying to their sons, 'Get money; honestly, if you can; but, in any case, get money'; and a satirist of our own age alleges that, in modern

life, the only unpardonable sin is poverty. On every hand men are making haste to be rich, and, if they succeed, everything is forgiven them. The gates of the highest society swing open to the man who has gold, and he is not asked how he has come by it. Over the man who has swindled and failed, society, with upturned eyes, pronounces an annihilating judgment; but the adventurer who brings home bullion tinged with the blood of slaves is welcomed as an honour to his country and sent into Parliament.

One of the daughters of avarice which the old writers used to mention was *gambling*; and the need has not gone by for indicating the true place to which this vice belongs. The desire to make money is undoubtedly at the bottom of the practice—to make money in haste, without giving

any equivalent for it—and this is its condemnation. But, after it has grown into a habit, it becomes a very complex thing. The gambler can hardly tell why he follows with such eagerness the events of the green turf and the fortunes of the green table. There is a fever in his blood which drives him on, rendering ordinary pursuits and ordinary gains stale and making his own heart reckless and hardened. A single act of gambling has an innocent look, and the first steps in a gambling career are frequently exhilarating; but the atmosphere soon becomes grimy, the associations and companionships into which it leads are demoralising, and many a time it ends in the dock and the jail.

II

Such are the daughters of avarice, and the character of the progeny does not say much for that of the mother. What the innermost nature of avarice is may be learned from the well-known words of Scripture—'Covetousness, which is idolatry.' Pride, the first of the deadly sins, is also a kind of idolatry: it is putting self in the place of God. But avarice substitutes for God an even more amazing deity—something outside of ourselves, earthly and material. We think with disdain of the folly of the heathen, who bend the knee to graven images; but many a man's money is his god, and the coins of silver and of gold which he fingers so caressingly are in reality images in which his deity is embodied. This may seem a figure of rhetoric, but it

is the sober truth. For, what is it to have a god? It is to have an object to which the heart turns with supreme affection and to which the mind looks as a refuge and defence in all the changes and chances of time. Are there not, however, those who feel the money they possess to be a far safer assurance against possible calamity than faith or prayer, and who would feel the loss of the opportunities of worshipping God afforded by the Sabbath and the sanctuary a far less sensible calamity than the loss of their money?

This unconscious idolatry sits deep in many hearts in the form of what our Lord called 'carefulness'—that is, the continual indulgence of carking care, a lifelong dread of poverty, a sense that, not having money, they have no protection and no hope.

For avarice is not confined to those who are wealthy: the poor may be equally the victims of it. Excessive elation in the possession of money and excessive depression on account of the absence of it are, in fact, at bottom the same feeling; and the feeling is, that money is the true divinity, besides which there is no other. It is no unusual thing to hear the avarice of the rich denounced in a spirit of the most sordid greed, the language betraying the belief that money can do everything and making it patent to the critical hearer that the orators, if they possessed money, would be as absorbed in it and as forgetful of the claims of others as those they denounce. The man who is loudest in denouncing tyrants often becomes a tyrant himself, when he gets the chance; and those who cry out for

equality are sometimes the first, when they have obtained the upper hand, to shake off the claims of fraternity. The worship of money is not a religion which favours the brotherhood of man.

III

Deep students of human nature have spoken of avarice as incurable. Thus Dante, personifying it, says:—

Accurst be thou,
Inveterate wolf, whose gorge ingluts more prey
Than every beast beside, yet is not filled,
So bottomless thy maw.

Many a man, at the beginning of his career, dreams of no greater fortune than a few hundreds; but, if he is successful, that which was once the limit of his ambition soon becomes only the starting-point. He may have

been humble, and prayerful and thankful for his early successes; but, as his money carries him further and further away from the habits and associations of his youth, his heart hardens, and his faith is transferred from God to Mammon; he becomes proud of himself and contemptuous of his fellow-men. Thus the very goodness of God makes him forgetful of his Maker. As long as he was little, he recognised the hand from which his mercies were received, but —sad perversion—when mercies are multiplied, the Giver is forgotten.

Avarice is distinctively a sin of the old; and it is this which makes the cure of it so hopeless. As other sources of happiness fail, this one seems to grow more substantial; and the flattery which the dependent are too apt to bestow on those from whom they have expectations pro-

duces by degrees a sense of omnipotence. On the canvas of the painter a miser is usually represented as an old man clutching with thin and bony fingers a bag of gold. But this is a fancy picture. The real danger, which has to be resisted by old and young alike, is the tendency to believe that, if we have money to trust in, we can dispense with both the blessing of God and the sympathy of man.

IV

I have not hesitated to paint this deadly sin in its true colours, but I should feel that I had rendered to my readers a very indifferent service, if I merely left on their minds the impression that money is an enemy of which they must beware. Every one knows better, and nothing tends more to associate the pulpit with un-

reality than sermons which leave impressions of this kind. Every one knows, on the contrary, that money is a good thing; most men are giving the sweat of their brow and the force of their brain for it; they are well aware that without it they cannot set up a home and fill it with refinement; families and countries which are exercising the virtues of industry, honesty and sobriety tend to grow rich; and art, science and even religion are, in many ways, dependent on money. The fact is, young men are in quite as much danger of putting too little value on money as too much. They often fling it away with both hands, to their own injury and that of others. Prodigality is nearly as much the besetting sin of youth as avarice is the besetting sin of age; but virtue lies between the extremes, and its name is liberality.

To be forearmed against avarice we require to have three convictions sunk deeply in our minds.

The first is, that *there are better things than money.* Good health is better; a sympathetic heart is better; a clear conscience is better. With these it is possible to be happy without money; but without these the happiness which money gives is deceitful. Not only, however, must these be prized, but so diligently acquired as to prove that their possessor knows he cannot do without them. A cultivated mind, for example, that knows something of the best thoughts of the best thinkers of the past, or an active sympathy with the wants and aspirations of mankind, is not obtained by merely wishing, but by working honestly and feeling deeply; only, when it is once got, it cannot be parted with,

for it is felt to be a possession beyond all price. I know a public man in a great position who was approached, when the election was hanging in the balance, by the representatives of a party in the electing body which wished him to make a promise to them which would have secured their votes, but his answer was—'Gentlemen, there are some things in this world I can do without, and one of these is this office for which I have been named; but there are some things I cannot do without, and one of these is my honour—good day, gentlemen,' and he bowed them to the door. This is the attitude we should take up to the temptations of avarice. There are some things we can do without, and one of these is wealth; but there are some things we cannot do without, such as a clean conscience and a useful life; and, if

we must choose between money and these, we forego the money.

A second conviction, to be engraven still more deeply on the mind which would defend itself from the invasions of the sin of avarice is, that *money is not an end in itself, but only a means to an end.* It will tyrannise over us if it is allowed, but we tyrannise over it, and prove ourselves its masters, when we compel it to subserve the ends which we have freely chosen as our own, and which our judgment and conscience approve.

When any one has much wealth, we are wont to call him 'a man of means.' But not infrequently the phrase is a misnomer; because means imply ends to which they are devoted, and many a wealthy man has no such ends. He does not know why he makes money; he is like a horse turning a mill, accustomed to

the monotonous round; he is the slave of money, which claims all his thoughts and all his energy. Yet the phrase 'a man of means' conveys the hint that money can be used in promoting rational and useful ends, and this is true. People often speculate on what they would do with money if they had an immense amount of it. Such musings may not be amiss, but they are mere illusions, unless we are devoting to the same ends such means as we now happen to possess. David Livingstone, before he had thought of being a missionary, devoted to foreign missions all his wages as a patternmaker, except so much as was required for his frugal personal wants, and there have not been wanting in recent times those who have carried on large and flourishing businesses the profits of which they have devoted to some favourite

scheme of benevolence. One wonders that this should not be commoner. But multitudes who have never felt called upon to sacrifice all their income in this way give liberally of their earnings to causes which lie near their hearts, and they experience a profound satisfaction in so doing, because they feel that they are making their money serve their life-aims, and they are keeping themselves free from enslavement to it. I remember hearing a friend of my own tell of the effect on himself of his first givings to the schemes of his Church. He was not at the time earning much, and what he gave cost a real effort and sacrifice; but he felt that he had now something to work for; this heightened his consciousness as a man and a Christian; it made him also look so carefully after his money that, he maintained, he was a gainer,

even pecuniarily, in the long-run. Giving is usually spoken of as if it were the wringing of unwilling drops out of flinty hearts; but there is a remarkable verse in the account of the gifts offered in David's time for the temple which Solomon subsequently built—'Then the people rejoiced for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly to the Lord, and David the king also rejoiced with great joy.' There is great joy in giving, when it is not forced and indiscriminate, but willing and intelligent—that is, when we give to causes with which we are well acquainted and for which we cherish enthusiasm. Ought it not to put new energy into a man's fingers and help him to sing as he toils, when he reflects that he is earning money to assist the cause for which the Saviour died?

The third principle about money deserving to be inscribed on the mind which would escape the bondage of avarice is, that *it cannot be kept for ever.*

'Lay not up for yourselves,' said the Teacher of teachers, in the Sermon on the Mount, 'treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.' There are those who mock at such teaching, declaring the idea of a treasure in heaven to be merely an illusion by which the poor are blinded to the treasure which is their due on earth. A paradise above the skies is only an invention of priests to cheat

men out of the paradise they ought to seek here below. If this be so, how sad it is that the earthly paradise lasts so short a time even for those who attain it. The existence of heaven may be doubted, but there is no denying the reality of death. However much a man may have amassed, he has in a moment to leave it all and fare forth into the unknown, naked as he came from his mother's womb. What has he, then, if there is no Saviour to meet him on the frontier of the other world and conduct him safely to the many mansions? Is he not poor indeed? But, if a man has realised within himself a virtuous and holy character, this is a possession over which time has no power, it is incorporated with his very existence, and the owner carries it with him wherever he goes—ay, even across the

bourne of death. He who has spent his life in doing good, making to himself friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, will be met at the gates of heaven by grateful hearts, which have gone before and will welcome him into everlasting habitations. It may be said, that the avaricious man has at least the satisfaction of leaving his money to his heir. But this is a mixed satisfaction; for he does not know whether his heir will be a wise man or a fool, whether he will keep what he has inherited or squander it. The influence, on the contrary, of a benevolent and useful life goes on after death, and reproduces itself in those whom it awakens to aspiration and imitation.

> Only the actions of the just
> Smell sweet and blossom in the dust.

LUXURY

THE Latin name given by the old writers to the third of the Seven Deadly Sins is *luxuria*, and I have translated it literally by the English word 'luxury.' But our word is a euphemism for what was meant, for the sin which the schoolmen thus designated was what we should rather call sensuality or licentiousness—in a word, all offences of whatever kind against the seventh commandment.

This is a sin of which it is difficult to speak, and in ordinary circumstances the less said about it the better. Silence is sometimes more eloquent than speech, and the reticence in which this sin is shrouded is the severest of all condemnations;

for it signifies that sins of this kind are so bad that it is a shame even to speak of them.

Still, reticence may be carried too far. The Bible is not silent on this subject. On the contrary, it not only speaks but thunders against it. In the Book of Proverbs, for example, which is especially intended as a handbook of the journey of life for young men, there is no other sin treated with so much amplitude and repetition. There is abundance of facts—of secrets known to all—in the life of the present day in both town and country to lay on the pulpit the obligation, unless it is to exhibit cowardice, to speak, if not frequently, at least firmly and fearlessly on this subject. Too absolute ignorance on the part of the young of the kind of world they are living in may give temptation a cruel advantage over

them; for the force of temptation often lies in surprise. One of the things impressed on my mind by what I have come to know as a minister is the early age at which the most dangerous temptations have often to be faced. Even at school attempts may be made to corrupt the mind. Young men are certain to be tempted, the assault on their virtue sometimes coming from the most unlikely quarters. Even young women need to be warned, as they go out into the world, that their ruin may be attempted by the very men from whom they should receive consideration and protection. No doubt there is a danger of kindling, by speech, the very fire we wish to quench; but there is an instinct in healthy minds which tells them whether what is said on this subject proceeds from pruriency or moral

earnestness; and I am not much afraid of being misunderstood, while I am sure that I can calculate upon sympathy in discharging a difficult duty.

I

Let us begin where the Bible begins—with the *thoughts*. Our Lord Himself said that whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery already in his heart; and St. Paul confesses that his own first sense of sin arose from the power of lustful thoughts. To such purely internal motions of the flesh heathenism attached no importance; and there are many to whom, so far from being repulsive, they form a part of the pleasure of existence, to which they return whenever their thoughts are released from occupation with other subjects. But

there can be no doubt that these are of enormous importance to character. It is not only that the indulgence of such thoughts in secret prepares the way for open yielding to temptation, but such thoughts themselves deeply stain and pollute the soul. The oftener they are repeated the more inevitably does the mind return to the same subject. Physiology would say, that in the very substance of the brain channels are dug to make the course of the current easy, till, at last, control is wholly lost, and the brain becomes a pandemonium of licentious scenes and images. Even the life of dreams is invaded by the habit, till to a conscience not wholly blunted, sleep itself may become a kind of terror.

The true defence against this tyranny of a foul imagination is the preoccupation of the mind with

manly and healthy subjects. What is bad can only be kept out by filling the mind beforehand with what is good. The more numerous the wholesome interests a young man has the better, to keep him from brooding on illegitimate themes. The mind depends to a considerable extent on the body, and a good state of health, kept up by plenty of exercise, fresh air and cold water, is an effective foe of morbid reveries.

II

Secondly, this sin may be committed in *words*. In this respect, indeed, there has been a vast improvement in the habits of society. A hundred years ago, just as profanity in speech was notoriously prevalent, even in the highest classes, so there was a freedom in speaking of those

things of which it is a shame to speak that would not now be tolerated; and, if you go further back in the history of this country—say, to the period immediately before the Reformation—you will find that our nation has been slowly emerging from a horrible pit of grossness. Open talk of this kind is now banished to the lowest and rudest portion of the population, and the man is branded who attempts to introduce it into society that has any respect for itself. Yet there are circumstances in which the old evil habit tends to recrudesce. For example, when young men are met together in the evening, there is a tendency, as the night grows late, to allow the conversation to wander on forbidden ground. Then men reveal what is in them—the objects on which they brood and dream when they are by themselves—and

one story of a questionable kind calls forth another. It is an hour to exercise watchfulness. A man who, in such circumstances, holds himself aloof will always command the respect of those whose approval is of value; and the silence of even one member of a company will not fail to touch the consciences of the rest, for all are in their hearts ashamed of the beast in themselves which they are permitting to become visible.

Along with conversation, may be mentioned reading of an unhealthy character. This is a difficult subject, because it is not easy to say where the line should be drawn, and because this is a case where the maxim holds good, that what is one man's food may be another man's poison. A mind pure and mature may peruse with advantage books which would be to another like fire taken into the

bosom. A young reader should not be ashamed to confess to himself or, if necessary, to others, that there are books which he cannot read with impunity; and, whatever be the course which others may pursue, he should judge by the effect produced on his own imagination.

In this respect also we are in a vastly improved position in comparison with our fathers. Last century the books in the English language adapted for hours of recreation and amusement were stained through and through with moral depravity, resembling, in this respect, the bulk of French literature at the present day, which, I often think, must reduce to despair those in that country who are really concerned about the morals of the young. It was the Evangelical Revival that drove the satyr from English literature, and it is only the

prevalence of an earnest religious spirit that can keep it out. Ever and anon it attempts to show its cloven hoof, and there cannot be a doubt that there are pens ready enough, for the sake of gain, to minister, if they dared, to the vilest passions. But it is not possible to be thankful enough for the general tone of literature amongst us during the last hundred years—for great poets, like Wordsworth and Coleridge, Tennyson and Browning, who have uttered nothing base—and for great imaginative writers, like Scott, Thackeray and Dickens, who are at this hour finding worthy successors in the writers of the Scottish School. In the work of all these there is presented an ideal of love which has done an immense deal to refine the habits both of thought and action in the population. In the older writers

love is confounded with lust; but these authors all recognise and teach that 'lust is no more love than Etna's breath is summer, and love is no more lust than seraphs' songs are discord.' There is, in fact, nothing which so successfully banishes lust from the thoughts as a pure and absorbing affection; and there are no better teachers than those who foster in the popular mind the belief that this passion is man's chief earthly happiness. Our poets and novelists have constituted themselves a priesthood of the love of woman in a way not dissimilar to that in which preachers are the priests of the love of God; they make the attainment of this love the goal of life in the same way as ministers make the love of Christ man's chief end; and, in fighting down the brute and cultivating the unselfish emotions, we owe

much to the earthly as well as to the heavenly evangel.

III

On *deeds* of sensual sin—the third aspect of the subject—I naturally hesitate to say anything. The peculiarity of such sins is that they involve the guilt of more than one. And herein, to a mind which has caught any faintest breath of the spirit of Christ, ought to lie the strongest defence against committing them. To sin oneself is bad enough, but to involve another soul in sin is diabolical, and especially in sin which brings such utter shame and reprobation as this does upon woman. The complaint is often made that the punishment falls so much more severely on the one sinner than on the other, and it cannot be denied

that the contrast is cruel; yet the loss to society would be infinitely greater than the gain to justice if the inequality were to be redressed by lowering the standard of womanly purity. Rather must the change take place in the opposite direction—by causing man to feel how hideous a crime it is to sacrifice the character of another to his own desires. This he ought to feel out of his own heart; but, if he has not enough manliness to do so, it ought to be brought home to him by the aversion and stigma of society.

It is not, however, true, though one would fain believe it, that temptation invariably comes from the side of man. By taking this for granted a young and inexperienced soul may find itself unexpectedly in a most dangerous position. This was the peril to which Joseph was exposed,

and many a one in every generation since has been surprised from quarters as little suspected. Surely Satan never achieves a triumph more complete than when she who was intended by her Creator to be the priestess of chastity and to refine and elevate man's coarser nature becomes his temptress and lures him to his undoing; but the streets of every city in the world bear painful evidence to the success with which even this master-stroke of hellish deceit has been achieved. In this respect some of our cities are honourably distinguished by the comparative decency of the streets, and too much credit cannot be given to the public officials to whom this is due; but in others open vice has been allowed to reach dimensions which are a horrible public scandal; and every young man going from the country to the town

ought to be forewarned. There is no sin which more quickly or inevitably destroys both soul, body and fortune; and especially to this open and unblushing form of indulgence nature herself has attached penalties of disease, descending often from generation to generation, so ghastly as to act as a glaring danger-signal on the downward road.

IV

Most of what I have said has been intended to put readers on their guard against being surprised by this sin, and I have taken it for granted that the conscience will immediately condemn it as soon as its true nature is realised. But not infrequently in the literature of the day there is insinuated a libertinism the object of which is to corrupt the conscience,

and many minds are subtle enough to invent for themselves the same kind of sophistry. If, it may be argued, this appetite is native to man, why should it not be indulged like any other natural desire? This is an argument which often has been used to break down the defence of virtue.

But our appetites are not given us merely for indulgence, but also for restraint. Every one of them has to be kept in its own place. If man surrendered himself, without restraint, to his natural impulses, he would be a beast. It is by mastering his impulses, and by the exercise of self-control, that he becomes a man.

And this is the supreme instance in which self-control has to be exercised. Here the effort is more difficult, needs to be more frequently repeated, and is more prolonged than

anywhere else. But the reward is correspondingly great. It is great in social life, for the chaste nation is the strong and prosperous nation; and what would the family be without chastity? It is great, too, for the individual:—

So dear to heaven is saintly chastity
That, when a soul is found sincerely so,
A thousand liveried angels lackey her,
Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt,
And, in clear dream and solemn vision,
Tell her of things that no gross ear can hear.

Granted that the instinct is one of the very strongest in our nature, is it not worthy of the Author of nature to have consecrated it to the sole service of unselfish love? Fatherhood, motherhood, childhood, home—there are no more sacred words in the world than these; and that

warmth is worthy of a unique consecration which, moving secretly in the stock of humanity, causes such exquisite flowers to burgeon on its surface. The Christian rules of chastity may seem harsh or cruel, but they are the prickly sheath which guards the most perfect flower of human happiness. A young man's worthiest dream is to see himself the centre of a virtuous home, to which he has brought a purity as perfect as that which he demands in the partner of his life, thus ensuring, as far as in him lies, the health and character of those who may come after him. This is the true earthly paradise: it is worth toiling for, it is worth waiting for, and it is worth denying oneself for.

Yet this is not the highest motive. We cannot dispense with that old motive with which Joseph defended

himself in the hour of temptation, 'How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?' What the tempter whispers is, 'No eye will see you, nobody will ever know'; and there are circumstances in which this argument comes with terrific force, as for example, in a foreign country, where the stranger is not known to a single soul. But there is an Eye which sees everywhere. Blessed is he who respects his own conscience and his God as much as a whole theatre of spectators.

Even yet, however, we have not reached the final motive. There is no sin which holds its victims in more hopeless captivity than this. If once one has fallen under its power in any form, it is almost impossible to escape again; as the Book of Proverbs says of the strange woman, 'none that go unto her return again,

neither take they hold of the paths of life.' But the impossible is not impossible to God, for with God all things are possible. Christ Jesus is the Saviour not only from guilt but from sin, and from this sin as well as others. Of this there is an immortal illustration in the case of perhaps the greatest intellect ever won to the service of the Gospel. St. Augustine was, in his unregenerate days, held captive by this sin, and in his *Confessions* he has told the story of his miserable bondage and his ultimate and complete emancipation. At the crisis of his conversion he was plunged in horrible distress between the force of inclination on the one hand and the call of conscience on the other; but it was a power far above his own that rescued him at last. He was sitting in a garden with his companion, Alypius, when he suddenly

rose to seek a lonely place, where he might give way, unobserved, to his emotion. As he went, he heard a voice, as of a boy or girl playing, which said, 'Take and read,' 'Take and read.' He turned back, and, lifting a book, which happened to be the Epistle to the Romans, from the table at which his companion was still seated, he let his eye fall on the first words which met him, and they were these: 'Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying: but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.' These were God's own words, and in them the hand of God gripped him. He felt that the long struggle had been taken in hand by One mightier than himself. Christ had redeemed him; and

from that time forth, in union with Christ, he became a holy man. When Christ is in the heart, no sin can permanently abide in it. The love of Christ constraineth us to abandon everything inconsistent with His presence. 'What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.'

ENVY

FOUR hundred years ago a Scottish poet—the greatest of all our Scots bards, in my opinion, with the single exception of Burns—wrote a famous poem, entitled 'The Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins.' It is a vision of hell, but very unlike the composition of Dante called by the same name. The daring poet imagines a holiday in hell, when Satan calls for a dance, and the different groups of partners are led out on the floor by the deadly sins. It is a bizarre and gruesome conception, such as the Scottish muse has always had a partiality for—this ancient poem of William Dunbar is a forerunner of Burns' 'Tam o' Shanter' —but it affords the opportunity of a

most graphic and pointed description of the deadly sins, an effort not unnatural to a churchman, as Dunbar was. Perhaps, as a specimen, his picture of Envy may be quoted, though the words will hardly, I fear, be intelligible—

Nixt in the dance followit Invy,
Fild full of feid (feud) and fellony,
Hid malyce and dispyte;
For pryvie hatrent (hatred) that tratour trymlit (trembled);
Him followit mony freik dissymlit
With fenzeit wordis quhyte (white),
And flattereris into menis faces,
And bak-byttaris (backbiters) in secret placis,
To ley (lie) that had delyte,
And rownaris (whisperers) of fals lesingis;
Allace! that courtis of noble kingis
Of thame can nevir be quyte (quit).

The dance of the deadly sins is placed

by the poet in hell; but it goes on in many a brain, and the devil provides the music.

I

Envy is grief or displeasure at the good of another—the good consisting of wealth or fame, or any other possession which men prize. And it is only the reverse side of the medal if we feel delight and exultation in another's evil—in his failure or ill success, or any other kind of calamity.

It is of consequence in the case of this sin to be particular about the definition, because there are motions of the mind not unlike it which are not vicious but virtuous. There is, for instance, *emulation*, which is frequently confounded with envy, but is, in fact, quite different. Emulation

is also excited by a neighbour's good; but the effect is not the same—envy produces a sense of depression and despair, but emulation produces feelings of admiration and imitation. Emulation may, indeed, desire to excel the virtue or ability which it copies — this is its nature — but it does so not for the sake of outstripping a rival, but in the sheer desire for excellence. Envy, in short, is ill-humoured, and emulation good-humoured desire to excel. The old writers used to distinguish from envy another feeling to which they gave the name of *nemesis*—a word which we do not now use in this sense; in fact, I hardly think we have any name for the feeling itself. It was lawful, they thought, to grieve over the success of another or to rejoice in his downfall, if it was in the interest of the public cause. Thus a

good man might lawfully grieve over the social elevation of a neighbour whose influence was likely to lower the moral tone of the locality, or a patriot might lawfully rejoice in the downfall of a tyrant. Perhaps, also, we may lawfully grieve at another's worldly prosperity, if it is obviously doing him spiritual harm, and wish to see his career checked, to make him think. But such sentiments are easily vitiated by the introduction of a personal element, because as one of La Rochefoucauld's biting maxims says, 'Few are able to suppress in themselves a secret satisfaction at the misfortunes of their friends.' At all events, it is the selfish element which is the poisonous ingredient in envy—the sense that we are affronted because another rises, or that we reap benefit and gratification from another's humiliation.

II

It may not be thought that this sin is worthy to be ranked with those we have already discussed — pride, avarice and luxury—and certainly, in some respects, it comes short of their colossal proportions. But there is something extraordinarily mean in the spirit which is unhappy and disappointed because another succeeds, while it glories in another's misfortunes. Such sentiments betray a selfish isolation and an utter absence of love which cannot but be both demoralising to character and, in the highest degree, displeasing to the God of love.

In history, envy has been the cause of some of the greatest crimes. The second notable sin of the world—the murder of Abel—was prompted by this base passion. Cain could not

bear that there should be any one more acceptable to God than himself. And may we not say that a great many of the persecutions and martyrdoms suffered by the people of God in every age have been due to the same cause — to the spite of the wicked at the existence of those whom they have secretly felt to be better than themselves?

A great many of the worst sins of the tongue are the product of envy. It is miserable to think how much of conversation consists of disparaging remarks about the character or the talents, the position or the conduct of others. Gossips cannot but admit the brilliance or the benevolence of the person they are criticising, but —— Oh, with how many of these envious 'buts' is conversation garnished. Those who make use of them not infrequently claim for

themselves, as they do so, the character of virtue: they are sorry they have to say what is about to follow; really it gives them pain to have to reveal it; but truth compels. Yet they have been working up to it all the time: they have only laid on the praise that they might the more effectively introduce the exception which was to cancel all. There are those who are cleverer still: they do not themselves make the damaging statements, but draw them out of the mouths of others, openly deprecating the censures in which they secretly rejoice.

How is it that we can be so petty and so false? Why should the humiliation of another thus afford us gratification? There are people who are sick with fear lest another should attain an honour which they themselves have not been able to reach,

and sick with chagrin because others are happier than themselves. But the worst element in their own unhappiness is their pettiness. Envy is its own punishment. To be consumed by this passion inwardly, and to live and move outwardly in an atmosphere of gossip and detraction, is a hell upon earth. Yet many are living in it.

Not only individuals, but families, classes, and even nations, can allow themselves to fall into this state of mind. There is a widespread belief that the glory and prosperity of our own country are regarded by certain other countries with chronic envy: but this idea is probably exaggerated; and, at all events, it will be safer for ourselves to remember that other nations believe us to be chronically the prey of a feeling not dissimilar to envy — the desire of Ahab for

Naboth's vineyard. We have not yet had in this country much of that bitter feeling between rich and poor which, on the part of the less fortunate, is mere envy of the more fortunate; but on the Continent this has been a prominent feature of the propaganda of socialism and communism. I have myself sat an entire day in a gathering of the International, where orators from the great cities of Germany were haranguing a crowd of working men. From the oratorical point of view, the speeches were of the most brilliant quality; but not one word was said of the interest or pride which a man should take in his work for its own sake, the only string harped upon being denunciation of the plutocracy for running away with more than its own share of the spoil. In the contests among ourselves between the

different classes of society there has hitherto, I think, prevailed much more of the spirit of good-humour. And long may this continue; for nothing can poison the happiness of any class so completely as envy for the goods of those above them. By all means let emulation prevail, and let the pathways be opened to merit; but it would do no good to those underneath in the social scale to blot out the image of a more refined life displayed in the class above them; for this is the very magnet which draws them upwards.

III

There are, no doubt, some natures more inclined to the sin of envy than others. It has sometimes been spoken of as a sin of the strong, who cannot endure that smaller people than themselves should appropriate

any of their praise or obtain any share of their possessions; and there have been in history remarkable instances of this insane desire to engross everything, as, for instance, that of Alexander the Great, who is said not to have tolerated any praise of his own generals, esteeming any recognition bestowed on them as subtracted from his own glory. But, I should fancy, envy is principally a vice of the weak, who, finding themselves beaten in the competition of life, grow sick with disappointment and are ready not only to envy man but to reproach God. 'Why has He created me as I am? Why has He not given me the gifts lavished on others?' As well might any one ask, 'Why am I not six feet high?' As well might the clay say to the potter, 'Why hast thou made me thus?'

Very moderate abilities may be

associated with limitless ambitions. A woman with but a tolerable voice may be as hungry for praise as a *prima donna*, or the orator of a town council covet as much recognition as would be the due of a statesman able to command the applause of listening senates; and, when the expected tribute is not paid, the sensitive, artistic nature is plunged in gloom and discontentment. Not infrequently envy is the fruit of idleness and laziness. Many have been endowed by nature with talents sufficient to win for them a foremost place, but they have not made use of them. Instead of living laborious days, they have expected fortune to drop into their lap, and, instead of cultivating their minds by burning the midnight oil, they have calculated on winning the prize by genius or cleverness alone. Then, when they see the object of their

ambition passing to those who have worked for it, they murmur against Providence and blame their stars. But they have only themselves to blame. A man of distinction, who was being assailed by envious detractors, said, 'They wish to have my fortune, but why do they not wish to have my labours?'[1]

IV

If it be asked how envy is to be cured in a nature which may be prone to it, I should say, first of all, *Learn to love excellence for its own sake.* In an old castle in the heart of Germany, celebrated for its picturesque situation and its noble proportions, and rendered famous by the fact that Martin Luther, the reformer, spent in it one of the most eventful years of his life, there is a wonderful

[1] See a capital sermon on Envy by South.

series of proverbs painted on the walls, one of which runs as follows:—

Ich liebe was fein ist
Ob es wohl nicht mein ist,
Und mir nicht werden kann,
So hab 'ich doch meine Lust und Freud' daran.

which may be rendered thus:—

I love a thing that 's fine
Ev'n when it is not mine,
And, though it never mine can be,
Yet it delights and gladdens me.

For many a year this old rhyme has haunted my memory and helped me, I hope, to keep envy at bay. To have an eye for whatever is fine, even though it is not ours and never can be ours, immensely increases our resources, for the world abounds with fine and noble things, and in a real sense they belong to us if we have the power of appreciating them. I

once said to the owner of an estate in which I had the privilege of walking, and in which I walked nearly every day for years, that it was more mine than his, for he seldom visited it; and we may become very rich if we make the most of all the fine things that are accessible to our observation and enjoyment.

This argument acquires far more force when those whom we are tempted to envy are using their talents for the glory of God and the good of the world. What! do we grudge that humanity should be served and God glorified by powers superior to our own? Would we impoverish the cause of progress or of the Gospel by restricting it to the support of those inferior to ourselves? We cannot love the good cause very passionately if we do not welcome every talent consecrated to his ser-

vice. Yet, it is to be feared, envy enters sometimes into the most sacred service. The human nature in a minister is tried when some one is settled in the same town whose fame puts out the light of his popularity, and it may take a time before even a good man can say, 'He must increase, but I must decrease.' There is a kind of vicarious envy which it is even more difficult to check—when a man's family or friends are more jealous of his position and influence than he is himself, and find it more difficult than he to brook the interference of a rival. Thus, in the Old Testament, the family of Moses looked with an evil eye on the prophesying of Eldad and Medad. But the great man of God, rising above the sentiments of his own champions, said to Joshua, 'Enviest thou for my sake? Would God that all the Lord's people

were prophets, and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them.' In like manner, when St. Paul's friends were drawing his attention to the shortcomings of rival preachers, he said, 'Nevertheless, every way Christ is preached, and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.'

I will give you one more remedy for envy: *Count your mercies.* The envious are always comparing themselves with their more fortunate neighbours; but the world contains many who are less fortunate than any of us; and why should we not sometimes think of them? If you ever enter an almshouse or a poor-house, you will feel yourself to be wealthy, even if you have only a moderate income; if you pass through the wards of a hospital, you will thank God for your good health, even if you sometimes have a headache

or a toothache; and so, by thinking sometimes of the multitudes less gifted or less prosperous than ourselves, we shall make the springs of gratitude flow within us. Do the mercies we have to be thankful for include the great salvation? Is our soul redeemed, and do we carry the hope of immortality in our breasts? If so, how can we ever be disappointed or envious? If we only realised how much we possess when we possess Christ, our mouth would be filled with laughter and our tongue with praise all the day long, and, catching the spirit of the Saviour, we should be able to rejoice with them who do rejoice and to weep with them who weep; and this is the final victory over envy.

APPETITE

THERE are three appetites which inhere in the flesh of man—the appetite of hunger, the appetite of thirst, and the appetite of sex. Of the third of these I do not require to speak here, having treated it fully in the chapter on luxury; but the other two call for attention in the present chapter.

I

Appetite, being part of the apparatus of the human constitution, has, of course, an important part to play in the economy of life; and it is not its use, but its abuse, which is sinful.

Hunger is one of the sternest facts of human experience. The appetite

asserts itself every day, and has to be satisfied. The time and strength of the great majority of the human species have to be expended in providing food for hungry mouths; and the task has to be discharged on pain of death. The daily lighting of the culinary fire, the varied labours of the farm, the trades of the miller, the baker and the cook, the transit of the products of different districts and different countries by means of the ship and the railway-train and other conveyances—these, and a hundred other operations, in which the services of millions of men and women are employed, are all concerned with satisfying the appetite of hunger. In fact, hunger may, without much exaggeration, be called the mainspring of the whole machine of human existence; for what else is it that sets people every day in motion and makes

them acquire the arts and crafts by which they earn their daily bread? The appetite of thirst is even more imperative and requires to be satisfied at least as often as that of hunger. Happily the means of satisfying this appetite are less costly, being liberally supplied by the bounty of Providence. Yet, in the complicated civilisation of modern times, enormous and costly engineering operations have to be undertaken to supply water to large cities.

It is only what was to be expected, when we consider the loving Providence by which our life is arranged, that the satisfaction of the appetites is accompanied with pleasure. The honest discharge of daily work causes hunger to be felt at the right time, and, as the proverb says, hunger is the best sauce. It is when no work is done to produce hunger that much

artificial seasoning of food is required to excite an appetite. It seems reasonable to believe that the satisfaction of the appetite of thirst is also intended to be accompanied with pleasure; but how far the simple means provided by nature may be manipulated with this in view, as food is rendered more palatable by cooking, is a question by no means easy to answer in every case. At any rate, mankind, in all ages and in all continents, have made use of other substances besides water, such as the juice of the grape, to quench thirst, or they have fortified water with other ingredients to make the act of drinking minister to pleasure.

II

It is of the abuse of these functions I have to speak to-day. And, first,

the abuse of eating is the sin of *gluttony*.

Savages, whose supply of food is meagre and uncertain, fill themselves to repletion when they get a chance, disposing at a single meal of a quantity of food which fills civilised onlookers with astonishment. The half-savage civilisation of imperial Rome was distinguished by occasional carnivals of gluttony, the details of which, supplied by historians and satirists, inspire the modern reader with perplexity and disgust. In the moral treatises of the Middle Ages very minute directions are given for avoiding gluttony, and it is manifest that this must have been a besetting sin of the monastic life. Inside the cloister there was too little variety to break the monotony of existence, and the dinner hour naturally became for many of the monks the most exciting

of the day. They are warned, accordingly, against a number of sins which can be committed in eating—such as eating before the appointed hour, being too nice about the materials of food, indulging in too highly-spiced cookery, eating too much at a meal, and the like. All these precepts need to be enforced on children still, and, no doubt, there are adults also who would be the better of hearing them repeated. But, on the whole, I should be inclined to say, gluttony is a sin which the civilised man has outgrown; and there is not much need for referring to it in the pulpit. Physicians may occasionally give their well-to-do patients a homily on a simpler life or exhort their poorer patients to substitute cheap but substantial articles of food for the unthrifty and innutritious diet they often make use of; but such pecca-

dilloes hardly come within range of the dread artillery of the pulpit. It is a curious fact that a sin which was once an urgent topic in the teaching of morality should now be so rare that we can practically neglect it. Let us hope it is a sign that man is gradually leaving the beast behind and rising into habits worthy of himself.

III

Unfortunately, if this can be truly said of gluttony, it cannot be said of the corresponding sin of *drunkenness*. While man has been obviously acquiring control of himself as regards the appetite of hunger, he has apparently been losing it as regards the appetite of thirst. As we enter the twentieth century, the testimony of experts is that in the British Isles the consumption of alcohol per head

of the population has increased during the century just finished by twenty-five per cent.; the consumption of the deadlier kinds of intoxicants has been rapidly growing during the last decade in several of the countries of the Continent; and the introduction and sale of the very worst European spirits among native races in all quarters of the globe must be reckoned among the most disreputable features of the history of the nineteenth century.

Every single act of drunkenness is a sin. It is a defacement of the divine image, a temporary dethronement of the power within man which ought to govern, and a casting of his crown of glory in the dust. Look at the drunken man—helpless, mindless, unclean—and say if he has not sinned against his own manhood and against the Creator of the same. One

of the worst features of drunkenness is that a man, when he comes out of the intoxicated state, never believes that he has sunk so low as he really has; but, if he could see himself as others see him, he would have to confess how far he had fallen beneath the dignity of his being.

The sin of drunkenness is aggravated by this, that it leads to other sins. It deprives the intoxicated man of self-control, and so gives the beast within him free scope. What control has an intoxicated man over his own chastity? What control has he of his temper? He may strike a cruel or even a murderous blow without knowing what he is doing. There is not a week but the newspapers contain such incidents, which would, in any other circumstances, make the blood of readers run cold, but receive hardly passing notice

because they arise from this cause. The act of drunkenness grows by degrees into a habit, although the victim is generally unaware what is taking place and is still quite confident of his power to manage himself long after the fibre of the will is completely relaxed. The whole moral nature, indeed, is slowly destroyed. First to go is the virtue of truthfulness; for the slaves of this vice will say or do anything to obtain what they need to satisfy the appetite, and you cannot believe a word that a drunkard says. One after another all other fine qualities disappear; and these are sometimes very fine indeed; for the victims of this vice are frequently the most gifted in both head and heart. Nothing is spared, until the end comes. It is said that sixty thousand die in this manner in these islands every year. What a proces-

sion of woe! Yet it is hardly noticed, it is so common. If it were the loss of a great war, it would sound, in notes of lamentation and woe, through the land in all the organs of public opinion, but it is only the nation's annual tribute to its favourite vice. What a hopeless procession it is, as it files into the eternal world; for these poor men and women are going to appear at the judgment-seat of Him who has said, 'No drunkard shall inherit the kingdom of heaven.'

Only half the truth, however, is told when we thus try to realise the sin and the misery of drunkards themselves. The evil spreads on every hand. Perhaps there is no drunkard who does not infect others with his own vice, for it is a conspicuously social sin. Besides this, however, multitudes suffer from it

through no fault of their own. The drunkard's home is a proverb for misery and hopelessness. His wife is kept in a state of never-ceasing suspense and fear, which no language can describe, and the more refined and sensitive she is the keener is her suffering. His children share the same feelings of humiliation and terror; and their health is often permanently injured, because the money which ought to be spent on their food and clothing is consumed on his vice. There are tens of thousands of children in our land growing up without a fair chance on this account. For it is not only here and there, at wide intervals, that this evil is doing its destructive work—it is everywhere. There is hardly a family in the country into the circle of which the pain and disgrace have not penetrated.

In short, this is the national sin at the present time, and it is making our country the byword of the world and drawing into itself, like a chronic sore, the force which should be invigorating every part of the body politic. The money, for instance, which should be spent on food and clothing, lodging and furniture, and which should be making the business of the baker, the butcher, the grocer, the joiner and the mason to flourish, is poured into the insatiable throat of this appetite, doing nobody any good. The ordinary mind cannot in the least degree realise the sum thus squandered every year, though it is named in words. A short time ago we were all talking of Foreign Missions as the most remarkable feature of the Christianity of the nineteenth century; but how many have realised that the

total sum spent on this object by all the Churches and missionary societies of Britain during the entire century is less than the sum spent in a single year on drink? A large proportion of the crime of the country has been attributed to drink by our foremost judges; and to the same cause must be referred most of the outlay of the nation on the expensive establishments requisite for dealing with crime and poverty. Yet the wealth of the country is deeply involved in the drink traffic; and the conversion of so many businesses into companies has, of late, given many more of the moneyed class an interest in its extension. It was no figure of speech when one of our leading statesmen said, not long ago, that the country must either throttle the drink traffic or the drink traffic would throttle the country.

In writing a lecture recently on the tragedies of Shakespeare, I was struck with the frequency of the references to this subject in the works of the national dramatist. Lady Macbeth confesses, she prepared herself, by taking stimulants, for the deed of crime. Of the drugged guards of the sleeping king she says—

> That which hath made them drunk hath made me bold,
> What hath quenched them hath given me fire.

In *Othello* one of the characters says—

I have very poor and unhappy brains for drinking ; I could well wish courtesy would invent some other custom of entertainment.

And again—

O God ! that men should put an enemy in their mouths to steal away their brains. . . . O thou invisible spirit of wine, if thou

hast no name to be known by, let me call thee devil.

In *Hamlet* the hero says of Denmark what many a Briton feels about his own country—

> This heavy-headed revel, east and west,
> Makes us traduced, and taxed of other nations:
> They clepe us drunkards, and with swinish phrase,
> Soil our addition; and, indeed, it takes
> From our achievements, though performed at height,
> The pith and marrow of our attribute.

IV

The magnitude and difficulty of this problem are manifested by the numbers of the solutions attempted.

The newest is the founding of a society composed of those who pledge themselves not to take intoxicants

except at meals, and not to treat. This proposal has been received with ridicule by both the press and the teetotal societies; but, I conceive, there are multitudes to whom it might be beneficial. There is a great difference between taking drink as part of food and taking it by itself, and there can be no doubt that treating is one of the worst features of social life. A publican has told me that five or six working men will come into his shop on Saturday on their way home. One of them treats the whole company, another does the same, and so on it goes, till all have treated all, and all are intoxicated. He told me, he could remember when the same practice prevailed among gentlemen at the luncheon bar; but in that class it had now, he said, entirely ceased—each asks and pays for what he himself requires, and

then departs. And it was my informant's opinion that the same change among working men would make a world of difference.

It has often surprised me that no movement has been set on foot to change the intoxicating liquors which are drunk. No one who has travelled much on the Continent can have failed to notice how rare it is to see an intoxicated person on the streets. Yet there is probably more drinking in Germany or France than in this country. The difference is due to the liquors consumed. If our working class confined their potations to something as light as German beer, and the wealthier classes theirs to light wines, there would hardly exist a drink problem. But it is by the strong and fiery intoxicants used by our population that the country is being ruined; and few are aware that

it is within comparatively recent times that the use of these distilled spirits has become general.

In all probability the next great step of reform will be a curtailment of the traffic by the interposition of the legislature. There is, indeed, an old and much-worn proverb which says that you cannot make people sober by act of parliament. But we are going to try the experiment, and that on a large scale. On this the country has made up its mind. Politicians of all parties have been very shy of approaching this question; but it overtops all their reforms, and of this the public mind is becoming so convinced that they will not be able much longer to give it the go-by. I hope the time is at hand when we shall see the rival parties competing with one another as to which is to be the executant of the will of the sovereign

people; unless, indeed—which would be better still—God raise up a statesman of first-class power who will make this the absorbing object of his life.

There is truth, nevertheless, in the saying that you cannot make people sober by act of parliament. Merely to shut the door of the public-house in the face of people who wish to go in is a very imperfect cure. How much better it would be if they did not want to go in, and consequently the door had to be shut from the inside. Why are people so eager to drink? There must be a vast, dull misery in their hearts to make them willing to sacrifice their means, their character, and their hopes for the sake of securing a temporary oblivion of their condition. Everything that imparts to men and women self-respect, that makes home more attractive, that interests them in

their work, that gives them a future and a hope, is an enemy to drunkenness; and such positive counteractives must be brought into operation, as well as measures of repression.

But by far the most powerful reform of recent times has been the temperance movement, which is said to number among its adherents, at the commencement of the new century, three millions of the population of the British Isles. These consider the crisis so acute and the temptations so abounding, that, for themselves and their families, they judge it safest and best to abstain altogether. But this movement is not, as is often insinuated, one for personal protection alone: it is inspired still more by a patriotic and humanitarian spirit. Its adherents feel so keenly the disgrace of the country, the debasement of human nature, the suffering of

families, the loss of immortal souls, that they are not satisfied with shielding themselves from attack, but have pledged themselves to attack and to overcome this evil; and they believe they can fight it best in temperance armour. Many of them would not admit that they are making any sacrifice, because they consider life to be healthier and happier without the use of alcohol. Others feel that there is a considerable sacrifice in having to act counter to the habits of the society to which they belong; but they are willing to accept any sacrifice rather than be neutral in a cause in which the welfare of man and the glory of God are so directly concerned.

As to each and all of these modes of avoiding and opposing drunkenness, it is for every one to be fully persuaded in his own mind; but it

will always be the duty of the pulpit to insist on four things, not as matters of opinion, but in the name of God — first, that drunkenness is a deadly sin; secondly, that no drunkard shall inherit the kingdom of God; thirdly, that it is the vocation of Christians to use the most effective means for putting an end to everything that is dishonouring to God; and, fourthly, that the only perfect defence against drunkenness is a living, working and rejoicing religion; as the Apostle says, well knowing why he places the two states in opposition to each other—'Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be ye filled with the Spirit.'

ANGER

ANGER is a sudden heating of the blood, which flushes the face with colour, while it makes speech forcible and action swift and sure. It is, in fact, a kind of military equipment, provided by nature to repel wrong and to avenge injustice.

I

It is not in itself sinful. There is a verse of Scripture which says, 'Be angry and sin not,' and this implies that there is an anger which, so far from being wrong, is a duty. Many times in Scripture we read of the 'wrath of God,' and we read also of 'the wrath of the Lamb.' In the

life-story of Jesus we read that on one occasion He looked round on a certain company 'with indignation, being grieved at the hardness of their hearts'; and what an image of indignant scorn He presented when He overturned the tables of the money-changers and, with a scourge of small cords, drove the buyers and sellers out of the temple!

Such instances of holy indignation suggest what the legitimate use of anger is. It is an upboiling of resentment against unrighteousness, either to prevent it from happening or to antagonise it and sweep it out of existence when it has obtained a footing in the world. How natural it is we may learn from the well-known precept to parents—'And ye parents, provoke not your children to wrath.' Parents may act towards their children in such a way as to outrage the

sense of justice in their little breasts and make them feel that they are betrayed and injured by those from whom they are entitled to expect protection. It is not good for children that this force of indignant resistance to what is unreasonable should be broken in them, and it is not good for the mature. We may become too tame. As in a highly-bred horse, however docile it may be, there always slumbers its native temper, so the excellence of human character depends on a sensitiveness of honour latent beneath the outward aspect of civility. To be utterly blind to insult and injury is not the evidence of a superior but an inferior being.

Especially when the wrong is a public and impersonal one, it may be a sign of the debased state of moral feeling not to be roused by it to indignation. When the news of the

Bulgarian atrocities reached this country, twenty years ago, the majority of politicians shook their heads and uttered lukewarm words of rebuke, but there was one statesman then among us by whom the outrage done to humanity was felt in the very marrow of his bones, and he went from end to end of the country denouncing, in season and out of season, the conduct of the unspeakable Turk. Politicians of all parties now agree that, in so doing, Mr. Gladstone was right; and it is a reproach to our statesmen on both sides that none of them felt the same consuming indignation at the recent repetition of the same atrocities in Armenia.

So far from it being wrong thus to glow with anger at public unrighteousness, it is a sin to be tame and silent. The other day I was reading a series

of articles by a strong young American thinker on 'the Christian of the Twentieth Century,' and, among other things, this passage occurred:—'There will be more and more need of great hatreds. Our talk of charity and tolerance must not blind us to the call for bitterness and wrath against all unrighteousness and ungodliness. The Christian of the Twentieth Century will know how to feel contempt as well as admiration, and detestation as well as love. It is related of Joshua Leavitt that once he greeted an advocate of the free-love abomination, who came to see him, with the words, "Sir, I abhor you, I abhor you, I abhor you." "Do not I hate them which hate Thee?" asks David, and he replies, "Yea, I hate them with perfect hatred." It was wrong to hate them as persons, but it would have been wrong to do other than

hate their hatred of God. Soft and easy toleration of everything will be called by the honest names of treason and dishonour. No feeling of love for the pure can long survive a decadence of the feeling of hatred for the impure.'

II

It was right to show that there is a legitimate and even an imperative indignation, but our chief business in this chapter is with the anger which is a deadly sin.

(1) It is such when it is directed against wrong objects. The legitimate objects of anger are injustice and folly; but it may be provoked by the opposite objects. A man may, for instance, go into a towering passion because a religious friend displays anxiety about his soul. A son may sulk or even run away from

home because of a reproof or a punishment thoroughly deserved. The thief is angry because his victim claims his own, and the tyrant because his subjects assert their rights. Pride and selfishness make demands that are thoroughly unjust, and wax angry with every one who does not concede them. Our sense of our own merits and rights is generally far in excess of our sense of the corresponding claims of others, and hence arises strife. Anger in one disputant breeds anger in the other; this, again, reacts on the first offender; and so it goes on till great sin is the result. It is no unusual thing in a prolonged quarrel to find that people have forgotten what at the first it was about. It was a triviality; but the injuries entailed by the contention arising out of it may be the reverse of trivial.

(2) Anger becomes sinful by excess.

Even when there is a real cause for it, the outbreak may be out of all proportion to the offence. 'Let not the sun go down upon your wrath,' is a precept of both the Old Testament and the New; and it would be well if this ordinance of nature—the setting of the sun—were universally agreed upon, wherever the sun rises and sets, as a signal to make anger to terminate. Jeremy Taylor narrates that Leontius Patricius was one day extremely and unreasonably angry with John, the patriarch of Alexandria. At evening the patriarch sent a servant to him with this message, 'Sir, the sun is set,' upon which Patricius reflecting, and the grace of God making the impression deep, he threw away his anger, and became wholly subject to the counsel of the patriarch. The very same indignation which may be useful in its

first outbreak becomes poisonous if allowed to sour into the vinegar of hatred and revenge; and it is not less dangerous to the breast in which it is entertained than to the person against whom it is directed. Few more troublesome guests can harbour in the heart of man than an angry and revengeful spirit.

(3) Anger becomes sinful when it vents itself in ways that are unlawful. It is, for example, one of the principal causes of profane language. Of this sin it is the custom of the world to speak lightly, as if an oath or two here or there did not signify. But no one who knows anything of the love of God can think without horror of the name which angels adore being mixed up with the filth and dregs of our angry passions; and, therefore, those who revere the name of the Father and the Saviour will avoid the

occasions on which it is apt to be used profanely. It is not only, however, in words that anger vents itself, but in acts, and these are apt to be violent and excessive. An angry man may inflict a blow that fills himself with horror as soon as the deed has been committed. It may even be a mortal blow; for he has so lost control of himself that his frenzy may carry him to any extreme. 'He that hateth his brother is a murderer,' says the Scripture; he has surrendered himself to a passion, and he does not know how far it may carry him. Many a murderer who has expiated his crime on the scaffold has hated his victim less than the man of colder blood may hate his enemy while yet sparing to strike; but, the deeper the hatred, the greater is the crime in the eyes of God.

(4) The form of anger which has

most to be guarded against is temper. This is a chronic disposition to anger. Perhaps some have more of a natural tendency this way than others; but it is very general. How many people will confess that they are naturally of a hot temper! But this is a poor excuse, for a swift temper is there to be controlled; and, if it is controlled, it becomes an ornament instead of a deformity to the character, imparting an elasticity and spring to action, which is otherwise too sluggish. But a hot temper uncontrolled becomes a curse in the home. There are no bounds to the violence some allow themselves; and all about them have to suffer from their strident voices, ill-natured looks, and unjust actions. A person with a temper can keep a whole household in continual hot water. Still more intolerable are those who shut themselves up in

sulky reticence, brooding over imaginary injuries, while the other members of the household do not know how to approach them or get a civil word out of their mouth.

Anger is, in short, the special sin of the home, and, therefore, it is specially odious to Him who has set men in families and intends the family to be the nursery of love and peace. A young man may be preparing for himself, and for those who will have the strongest of all claims on his affection, years of bitterness and sorrow by failing to chasten his temper before the responsibilities of married life begin; whereas a successful effort at self control, maintained in early years, will ensure a lifetime of happiness to both him and his.

III

Many cures for the sin of anger have been suggested.

Children are often told, that, if they could see themselves when they are angry—the swoln veins, the blood-shot eyes, the distorted features—they would never again allow themselves to become so ugly. And this is a lesson which the oldest of us may remember with advantage in a slightly altered form: anger is a triumph of the lower nature over the higher—a triumph of the beast over the angel. When temper is allowed to have its way, we are reverting to the savage. In the Middle Ages the aid of art was resorted to sometimes in order to impress the truth about the Seven Deadly Sins: and anger was represented as a figure riding on a camel, the most vicious of all

animals, while on the shield which it carried was painted a mad dog.[1] Anger is a brief madness; but we advance along the sunny pathway of our own evolution when we leave anger behind and cultivate thoughts of helpfulness and charity.

All have heard the practical rule, to count twenty before speaking when angry; and, joking apart, any device or practice which allows the first few moments of anger to pass without an explosion is of the utmost utility, because the second wave of angry emotion is much less lofty and crested than the first. Sometimes, when an angry quarrel is imminent, it is a good thing to walk off, to be out of harm's way; and it may shame an angry opponent if one is seen thus

[1] On the artistic representation of the Deadly Sins see the book of Zöckler mentioned in the Preface.

to avoid the triumph of unreason. Richard Baxter suggests that it is good to tell the person we are with when we feel the access of angry passion coming on; and certainly there are hours of inexplicable moody humour when we know beforehand that we are dangerous, but have enough reason and good nature to be able thus to give warning against ourselves.

St. Augustine, writing to a friend, the Bishop Auxilius, counsels him, when the winds and waves of angry passion rush down on his soul, to do what the disciples did in the boat when the tempest descended on them—call to Christ. If we could stay to interpose an ejaculatory prayer between the first fiery sensation of anger and its expression in word or deed, we should not often fall into sin of this kind; and our self-control would be still further confirmed by

the frequent contemplation of Him who, 'when He was reviled, reviled not again, when He suffered, threatened not, but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously.'

There are many people who have had hot and violent tempers in early youth but now exhibit a calm and even disposition: and the change is due to many struggles, many humiliations, many prayers; for it is by such means, as a rule, that the victory is gained. But it seems to be possible, at a single step, to leave the angry habits of a lifetime behind and enter at once into the placidity and sweetness of the Christian temper. One may get such a sight of how displeasing a bad temper is to God, and how unworthy of a follower of Christ, that all at once the violent or morose mood will be slipped off, like a filthy garment, and the Christ-like spirit

put on. Of this I came across a remarkable illustration in a book I was reading the other day—the life of the Rev. George H. C. Macgregor, a well-known Presbyterian minister in London, who was taken prematurely away last May from a life of great promise. His biographer, a gentleman of good sense and studied moderation, in describing a spiritual crisis through which he passed, says —'One striking effect was very soon discernible, of a kind which may well be recorded, because it is fitted to afford encouragement and hope to others. Nature had given him a peculiarly high-strung nervous temperament. This was specially seen from his childhood in sudden paroxysms of temper, in which he would quiver from head to foot or fling himself passionately on the floor. Even when he grew up, these appear

to have sometimes recurred. It was one of those things which, because they have to some extent a physical basis, even good men sometimes almost acquiesce in. One has heard a bad temper spoken of as a trial or a cross, as if it were, like lameness, a thing to regret, but beyond one's control or power to alter, to be accepted as a permanent fact of a human personality. That it is a cross, indeed, every Christian man cursed with such a disposition sadly knows. The struggle against it is often deeply discouraging; sometimes the only hope seems to be that t will mellow and soften somewhat as life advances. It was at Keswick that Mr. Macgregor first learned to think differently about this. There he learned first of all, as never before, to understand that yielding to any evil tendency, no matter how rooted in one's nature, were it hereditary

twenty times over, is sin. In that season of self-examination and soul abasement, when, as he wrote, "I have been searched through and through, and bared and exposed and scorched by God's searching Spirit," he had a special sense of the evil, and made a special agonising confession to God, of this besetting sin. And when, after these days of consecration, he left Keswick, certainly, to a large extent. the evil temper was left behind. From that time, he was really, in this respect, a different man. He would never have said, or dreamed of saying, that his inward disposition was all that it might be, or ought to be, absolutely conformed to the mind of Christ. Man's goodness is always defective. Doubtless at times our friend was ruffled. But there were no more paroxysms, and those who knew him best knew how all but unvaryingly serene his temper was.'

SLOTH

I

SOME of my readers may have felt a doubt now and then whether the sins traditionally recognised as the Seven Deadly Sins are really the most dangerous to which we are exposed; and this feeling may be intensified when it is mentioned that the Latin name for the last of the seven is one for which it is difficult to find a simple and natural equivalent in modern speech. The Latin word is *accidia*. Chaucer attempted to naturalise this in English by calling the sin accidie, and this winter I noticed in one of our religious periodicals a very able article headed 'The Sin of Accidie'; but not one

reader in a hundred would know, without explanation, to which sin the writer intended to point.

It has even been hinted that the sin itself is one of the past, which has disappeared from the modern world. We saw in an earlier chapter that gluttony is a sin of which this may, to a considerable extent, be asserted, and there can be no doubt that *accidia* held a more conspicuous place in the life of the monastic age, when the doctrine of the Seven Deadly Sins was originally developed, than it does in modern life. 'Those who are fasting about midday, when they begin to feel the want of food and to be oppressed with the heat of the sun, are most liable to the attacks of *accidia*,' observes Thomas Aquinas, one of the great authorities of the pre-Reformation Church.

Accidia was spiritual torpor—an

aversion to religious exercises, which, on account of it, were discharged perhaps with mechanical regularity, but without zeal or joy. It might sink by degrees into bitterness of soul and hatred of existence, and, if not counteracted, it might at last issue in lunacy or suicide. When we remember how many there must be among monks and nuns who have no real call to a life of contemplation, it is no wonder if a certain proportion of them live in a state of chronic disgust with their lot or fall into imbecility. Many readers will remember Gustave Doré's picture of 'The Novice'—one of the most terrible transcripts from human life I have ever seen—a young man with the light of youth and genius in his face, introduced for the first time among those who are to be his life-long associates in the monastery—a

row of mindless, joyless figures, out of whom every spark of inspiration has long since died—and in the one terror-stricken glance he is casting over them may be seen the whole tragedy of his life as it must be in the future.

Religious exercises were never intended to absorb the whole of our time, but to supply strength for the discharge of duty in the family and in the market-place; and the attempt to override nature cannot but have its revenge. The Romish Church condemns multitudes of men and women, intended by their Maker for social service, to spend their days in solitude, without the charities of home, without the presence of children, without the exhilaration of exertion; and the result must be, in many cases, untold agony and hopeless rebellion. No wonder that prayers

incessantly repeated become meaningless, or that the soul, shut away from the healthy activities of existence, grow peevish and despairing. The sin, in such circumstances, is artificial; it is not so much due to the rebellious soul as to the tyranny of an evil system; and it is no wonder if human nature breaks down under a yoke it was never intended to carry.

II

But, although artificially produced in the monastery, there is no doubt that spiritual torpor and aversion to religious exercises are very real sins; and so may be bitterness of soul and contempt of life; and these are the states of mind stigmatised by the term *accidia*.

In the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth cen-

turies there was an outbreak in literature all over Europe of what was called *Weltschmerz*—that is, disgust with the world, disgust with life, disgust with everything. It received its most famous expression in Goethe's youthful romance, *The Sorrows of Werther*, the hero of which, disappointed in love and despairing of happiness, shoots himself; and an epidemic of suicide is said to have been caused by the popularity of the book. By putting his sorrows into words, Goethe cleared his own mind of the hypochondria by which it was beset; but at the same time Lord Byron was, with less happy effect, putting similar sentiments into his poems, in which gloomy heroes rail against the laws of society and the customs of a world for which they deem themselves too lofty and noble. But, in reality, Byron was himself

always the hero of his works, under a variety of disguises; and his savage contempt for society and for life itself was nothing but the weariness of a worn-out voluptuary. He had lost the taste for healthy pleasures, and had so inured himself to unnatural ones, that at last he could get true satisfaction out of nothing and cursed the world because it could no longer supply anything to satisfy his hungry desires. The *Weltschmerz* of Goethe and Byron culminated in the pessimism of a Schopenhauer and a Hartmann by whom the nothingness of the world was stamped as a dogma and the existence of an overruling Providence denied.

There is a period in youth when a certain recoil from conventionality and a certain contempt for the world as it is may be anything but unhealthy; for such feelings may be the

seeds of progress. Young eyes see with astonishing clearness what is noble and what is base, what is right and what is wrong; they criticise without hesitation what offends their sense of justice; and, if they consecrate their energies to the task of remedying the evils they discern, great good may come of their noble discontent. But merely to criticise and do nothing cannot have a good influence. It sours the temper and produces a spirit of discontentment not only towards one's fellow-creatures but even towards Providence itself. Especially as old age approaches, this spirit ought to be carefully guarded against. Many men, as they leave middle age behind, perceive that they have scored less highly than they had expected in the game of life, and yet their chance is past, never to return. Then comes the temptation to grow

bitter against those who have been more successful and to refuse, because the great prize has been missed, to accept such opportunities as fortune may offer and to make the most of them. The sunshine fades from the landscape, and a gloom sets in which nothing can lift. 'The Fathers of the Church often urge it with special emphasis, that a dejection and sorrow entirely absorbing a man is at bottom nothing but ungodliness, and proceeds from the devil, for it arises from unbelief in the gospel of Christ, and unthankfulness for the grace of God revealed in Christ.'[1]

The inability to find any joy or satisfaction in the allotments of Providence is not, however, confined to those to whom the course of fortune has proved unkind; for the most utter weariness and disenchantment

[1] MARTENSEN, *Ethics*.

with existence will not infrequently be found in those who appear surrounded with every comfort or even luxury. I quote the following from the paper on 'The Sin of Accidie,' to which I alluded above:—'A large number of women in comfortable suburban homes are afflicted in this way. The necessaries, and many of the luxuries of life, are secured to them; their husbands are in the city and their children at school; there is no immediate point of interest that appeals to them. Outwardly they might not unreasonably be expected to be thoroughly and unreservedly happy. And yet many a poor man's wife, who has to earn her living in addition to caring for her husband and children, is ten times as happy as the employer's wife, who has no such strain put upon her, but who, nevertheless, is profoundly miserable

in the midst of her comforts—just because she has so little demand made upon her energies. The remedy here is to find some channel of Christian and philanthropic work into which to throw the mind's energies and the heart's love. It is wonderful what a medicine for accidie is found in disinterested and hearty service for others. The fogs of melancholia vanish, and the inner sunshine returns, when we do something for another human being whom we can benefit. How many miserable women would be happy if once they tasted the joy of doing good.'

III

'Sloth' is the term I have chosen, in the title of this chapter, for the old theological word *accidia*; and, although it is hardly wide enough to cover all that was intended, it yet

has an extensive scope, and is capable of bringing the sin home to our own consciences.

Spiritual sloth or torpor is exhibited on a vast scale by those classes of the community that entirely neglect the worship of God. These are often spoken of, under the name of the lapsed masses, as if their condition were their misfortune and not their fault. But they are all the creatures of God, living on His bounty; in a thousand ways they have experienced His goodness and mercy; many of them are daily receiving at His hand all things richly to enjoy—for the lapsed are not confined to the poor—and yet they give Him no thanks and take no pains to stir up their hearts to gratitude and praise, but, on the contrary, keep Him as far as possible out of their knowledge. They are suppressing the most glorious powers

of their own being; for undoubtedly the noblest part of man is that which links him with the divine. I like to see in the streets, on Sunday evenings, the groups round open-air preachers, for these are an evidence that even in the most careless and abandoned there exist chords that vibrate to the Word of God and the tones of worship. But the godward powers within us ought not to be left to such casual impulses: they need careful and constant culture, and the place to obtain this is the house of God.

Irregularity and carelessness on the part of those who are connected with the Church are generally due to the same cause. Indeed, I am inclined to think that there is no greater enemy of the Church than sloth. Persons keeping lodgers have often complained to me of the way in

which, on the Lord's Day, all the arrangements of the household are thrown into confusion by those who are not only prevented by their own sloth from being in the house of God but prevent others also from attending who would like to be present. Yet the fault is not all on one side, for young men have complained to me that it was impossible for them to attend the Sabbath Morning Meeting because of the delay and lateness on Sabbath morning in their lodgings. Such malarrangements may appear to be trifles; but, if their effect be to stunt the growth of character at the critical stage, and thus to destroy the powers and influence of the whole subsequent life, it is manifest how serious they are. Nothing can be a trifle which interferes with the work of the Spirit of God.

I remember an intimate friend,

when we were fellow-students together, after he had passed through a great spiritual crisis, saying to me, 'I have been perishing through sheer sloth.' What he meant was, that for years he had been quite well aware that it was his duty to be up and doing—acting on his convictions, confessing his Saviour, and taking his share in God's work — but that he had procrastinated owing to a kind of torpor and unwillingness to be bothered. Does not his confession sum up the real history of many a soul?

There are times when a sort of spiritual numbness steals over the spirit. Prayer becomes remiss; the Scriptures become dry, and the reading of them a duty more than a pleasure; motives which have stirred us to the depths of our being appear no longer to act. In this condition

evil habits come back and secure a footing in the places from which they have been dislodged; we begin to think we have been too puritanical in denying ourselves and breaking with the world, and we venture upon dubious paths on the plea that they cannot be demonstrated to be absolutely wrong. This is backsliding; and what does it consist in, when you examine it closely, but spiritual sloth?

IV

The grand remedy for such a state of decay is to remember that the normal condition of a Christian is one of joy. Joy is not only an occasional privilege, but a constant duty—'Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say, Rejoice.' There is something defective in our religion if it does not fill us with a happiness

which is fatal to indifference or despair. If we are acquainted with the redeeming love of Christ, surely there is fire enough in it to keep our hearts warm. The Spirit of God is given to them that ask Him; and to be filled with the Spirit is to be borne along by an inspiration which supplies to all our endeavours a strength above our own.

I repeat what was suggested in the extract quoted already from the article on 'The Sin of Accidie'—that the secret of spiritual health and happiness is, to be engaged in doing good. When a man's religion is confined to his own breast and is limited to anxiety about his own eternal welfare, it is no wonder if it becomes dreary and morbid; for he is like a person who never breathes the fresh air or takes any exercise: he is not fulfilling the conditions of health. But let him

interest himself in others, let him confess the Saviour, let him cultivate Christian fellowship, let him lend a hand to help those who are trying to make the world better and to bring in the kingdom of God, and, as the colour comes to the cheeks of him who climbs a mountain, so he will find that doubt and indifference take flight from his soul, and that the joy of the Lord is his strength.

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